

VOLUME 24

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# Christian Order

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DISSECTING A DISSENTER

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# Tidings of Great Joy

Hail Mary ! Holy One of God !  
Thou alone of His creatures trod  
Unerringly, the path of His Blest Will.  
Because thou didst assent His Will be done  
In Nazareth, by Gabriel made known,  
In Bethlehem, His Mighty Word is shown —  
A Virgin's Son !

Oh, with what joy, what joy ! did Heaven's King  
His Holy Mother her first honours bring !  
What though the town refused the Mother-Maid  
The meagre succour prayed ?  
Within a lonely cave, upon her knees,  
In that rapt Night and still —  
The High God set His Throne !

What though unheeding slumbered most the earth ?  
Rejoiced the heavens in divine delight !  
Poor shepherds, guarding sheep upon a height,  
Saw, opening to their wondering sight,  
Skies vibrant with veracious mirth,  
Dazzling with singing beings bright,  
Dancing to angel-minstrelsies !

And heard the cause of their ecstasies :  
"We bring ye tidings of great joy ! This Night  
We laud your Saviour's Birth !"

Mary Ada George

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Please let us know two or three weeks ahead if possible and please send us both new and old addresses. Thank you.

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# Christian Order

EDITED BY

Paul Crane SJ

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## Thank You in Advance

THE EDITOR

ONCE again, this year as every year, December seems to come round with increasing rapidity. And each year, with its coming, there comes the need also to write this Editorial. I confess that I find it a hard one to write—in this sense, that it comes at a time when an outsize number of subscriptions are due for renewal; which means that, unless they come in very promptly, I am likely to be lumbered with what is known politely as a “liquidity” crisis. This means, in brutal terms, that I would not be able to pay my bills (which have a habit of coming in with the utmost regularity !) and would be forced, as a result, into bankruptcy. This has been the fate of not a few publications during past months. It has not happened yet to *Christian Order* because so many of those whose subscriptions are due this month (and, let me be fair, other months as well) are so prompt and so generous with their renewal of subscriptions. Neither do I think it likely to happen. Indeed, I would be giving a totally wrong impression if I led them to believe that the financial failure of *Christian Order* was just round the corner. This is in no way the case; and it would be “sharp practice” if I led readers to believe that it was. This I would never do. All I am saying is that the natural anxiety I always feel at this time of the year—simply because so many renewals are due—will be greatly lessened if, as many of you as are able, renew your subscriptions by return of post. As I write

these lines, I feel very sure that you will do this and I thank you in advance for doing so with all my heart.

One of the things that has helped *Christian Order* so much in the past has been not only the promptness of so many renewals; but the wonderful generosity that has accompanied them. So many now send "something extra" with their subscriptions that I am hard put to it to thank all those who renew with such generosity. I do my best. I ask those whom I may have failed in this matter this past year to forgive me. I am as grateful to them as to everyone else. And, please if you can, even during these financially tough days, continue this practice! Without it, I might well have had to raise the price of *Christian Order* once again, a thing I would have hated to do. All I can say, at the moment, is that I can see no sign of this happening. Thanks to you, *Christian Order* remains solvent and its bills are paid.

And the magazine is spreading its wings, reaching out far and wide. To no small extent this is due to those of you who have sent in gift subscriptions, either for a friend or for the Editor to dispose of as he thinks fit (please see the enclosed Gift Subscription form). As a result, *Christian Order* is getting into the hands of hard-pressed priests in mission lands, to say nothing of lay men and women in those countries, who are extremely happy to have it. I know because they write and tell me so. And not only readers who are far away, but many here at home, who write and tell me how much it means to them and how they appreciate it. And others, too, who have picked it up somewhere, send in a subscription and say, "Why didn't I know *Christian Order* before? It is just what I have been looking for". I think there are a lot more of these. I want so much to get to them. Help me to do so, please, by the continued generosity of your prompt renewals and by introducing *Christian Order* to your friends. The magazine is going steadily forward. Its progress will be still more rapid with your generous help.

Once again, this year, I would like to wish you all blessings at Christmas and during this coming year. Thank you all for your magnificent support. And, please remember *Christian Order* and its Editor need your prayers. He does not forget you.

**How a noble bishop in the Australian eucalyptus heartland kept the balance in the wake of Vatican II during the span of years, 1965-1979. The occasion was a letter written to explain his inability to attend an important Congress in Rome to which he had been invited. Bishop Stewart took the opportunity of presenting a paper to be read to the Congress in his absence and in which he outlined his own struggle to hold fast to the Faith of his Fathers on behalf of the Faithful in his Diocese of Sandhurst, Australia.**

## Striking the Balance

RIGHT REVEREND BERNARD STEWART

(Retired Bishop of Sandhurst, Australia)

**Y**OU have honoured me with an invitation to address this assembly convened under the title PRO ROMA CATTOLICA. Yet my credentials are singularly few. I am no noted expert in sacred scripture, theology, canon law, history, sacred music . . . and certainly not in liturgical dancing or similar sacred gymnastics. I am just a Catholic bishop, a pastoral bishop now retired: a bishop present at all sessions of Vatican II; a bishop who strove for fourteen years to implement conciliar teaching until retirement in the year 1979 at the age of 79. The only credential that I can find is that I was baptised a Catholic, confirmed a Catholic, ordained a Catholic priest, consecrated a Catholic bishop, appointed by the Bishop of Rome to be bishop of rural Sandhurst in Australia—ever in communion with the Holy See, loyal to the Successor of Saint Peter. Put simply, I am Catholic and Rome; with you I stand Pro Roman Cattolica.

You kindly asked be to come in person. I cannot; distance is too great, disabilities of age too grievous. So I make these words my own:

"I wish to all those at Rome whom God loves and has called to be holy, grace and peace from God our



Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ . . . I long to see you, in the hope that I may have some spiritual gift to share with you, so as to strengthen your resolve; or rather, so that he faith we find in each other, you and I, may be an encouragement to you and to me as well (Romans 1:7/11, 12)."

### *The Main Cause of Imbalance*

It has not been easy for a Catholic bishop charged with pastoral care to strike a balance during the twenty years that have elapsed since the inauguration of Vatican II on the then feast of the Divine Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 11th October, 1962.

The root cause of the imbalance is that not everyone is prepared to take a stand with Peter and under Peter (cf. Vatican II, *Ad Gentes* 38). The Holy Father must be followed in moving forward with *aggiornamento* and in holding to Tradition from the past. It is his part to show the stance of balance, the bishop's to take it; and to get his clergy, religious and laity to take it.

The bishops in Council were directed by the Pope to guard the Sacred Deposit handed down once for all to the Church (cf. Jude v./3) and to present the Faith in ever more salutary manner. This is to be done always "in the form of sound words" (cf. 2 Timothy 2/3; Titus 1/9, 2/1).

### *Necessity of the Form of Sound Words*

The assembled bishops were listening to John XXIII that day: but so also were their experts of many colours; and not all of these were heeding all the papal words. Some riveted their attention on *aggiornamento* and the signs of the times. This made them deaf to the Petrine warning that even among the brethren "there will be false teachers covertly introducing pernicious ways of thought" (2 Peter 2/1), oblivious of the Pauline caveat against "new intruding forms of speech, quibbling knowledge that is knowledge only in name" (I Timothy 6/20).

Both John XXIII and Paul VI provided for controlled pastoral experimentation but not for tampering with Faith

and Doctrine; neither of them intended to put aggiornamento into perpetual motion. They reckoned without certain experts; they did not expect experimentation uncontrolled by bishops.

New thoughts were expressed in the Council, and that was good: new expressions also, and that was not always good. Corrections were made within the Council. For example Paul VI made no less than sixteen alterations to the text on ecumenism; he insisted that the bishops, in banning contraception, take into account the previous papal condemnations by Pius XI in 1930, Pius XII in 1952 and 1958, by himself in 1964; he issued the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* in 1964 and *Mysterium Fidei* in 1965 so that the form of sound words would be used in reference to the Church and the Blessed Eucharist.

But outside the Council new intruding forms of speech, quibbling words were used more and more in reference to the Church, to ecumenism, to the Blessed Eucharist, to the papacy, to marriage, to original sin and personal sin, to sanctifying grace, to the sacraments, to the Decalogue, to conscience, to redemption, to judgment and purgatory and hell and heaven.

It does not take long for questionable vocabulary to harm a known and cherished article of Faith. Who does not know the wrong done to the doctrine of the Eucharist by popularising transcommunication and transignification at the expense of transubstantiation? Who has not witnessed malpractice at Mass when the sound word Sacrifice has been made to yield to the mundane term meal, slavish imitation of Teutonic *mahl*? Whatever happened to Sacred Banquet and *Sacrum Convivium*? Who has yet measured the loss accruing by dubbing the Priest at the altar president? . . . or when little children are told to eat the bread or even chew it rather than to receive Holy Communion or consume the Sacred Host (and teaching them that Host means Victim)? Has anyone measured the damage flowing from uncontrolled experimentation in religious life or in once hallowed devotional practices of the Laity? When Religious forsook vows for commitments? When Friday abstinence from set food as played down?

Must not some halt be called if the balance is to be struck? Th ancient Phoenicians dared not go beyond the Pillars of Hercules into uncharted seas.

### *The Pope Tells Bishops to Call a Halt*

Within five years, deviation from Conciliar teaching had so adversely affected faith, morals and right order that Paul VI lifted his voice to stir bishops to their bounden duty:

“... in the face of ravages being inflicted upon Christian people by the diffusion of venturesome hypotheses and opinions that disturb the faith, we have a duty . . . Dearly beloved brothers, le us not be reduced to silence for fear of criticism . . . Not to the learned has God confided the duty of authentically interpreting the faith of the Church; that faith is borne by the life of the people whose bishops are responsible for them before God. It is for bishops to tell the people what God wants them to believe (Paul VI to Bishops, 8th December, 1970)”.

A cursory reading of the *Osservatore Romano*, 1970-1982, shows that this admonition, in substance, has been uttered repeatedly, especially during episcopal ad limina visits, not forgetting the extraordinary synod of Holland's Bishops in 1980. As recently as October 1982, John Paul II told the council of European bishops that the crisis of Europe is the crisis of Christian living. Cardinal Hume, president of the council, said that disunity among Catholics is a major obstacle to the Gospel and it is the duty of bishops to take proper measures to put an end to it. Be it noted that there cannot be Catholic Church disunity as such: Christ willed His Church *una et unica*; and the Holy Ghost keeps it so (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio* 1). But there are Catholic individuals who still strive, wittingly or unwittingly, to tear asunder that unity. Unless they amend they will only separae themselves totally or partially from it. For their own sake as well as for their people Cardinal Hume told the European bishops to stand firmly against disruption.

No bishop can do this unless he take his stand publicly with Peter and under Peter. Otherwise he has no mandate

to lead a diocese; neither have people any duty to him. The bishops themselves subscribed to this (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 25, 26; *Christus Dominus* 3; *Ad Gentes* 38). His first step is to check error and the erring; the second to state true Catholic teaching in the form of sound words. This takes courage: "show a bold front at all points to your adversaries; that is the seal of their perdition, of your salvation, and it comes from God" (Philippians 1/28). Some have courage as, for example, the late Bishop Joseph Vincent Sullivan of Baton Rouge, the late Archbishop Robert Dwyer of Portland, Bishop Philbin recently retired from Down and Connor, Auxiliary Bishop Vaughan of New York, Cardinal Siri of Genoa, Bishop Adrian Simonis of Rotterdam, Bishop John Gijzen of Roermond, the late Cardinal Taguchi of Tokyo, Bishop Juan Fremiot Torres of Ponce. There are others; would there were more. When Gideon found but three hundred to sound the trumpet with him, victory was assured. Saint Paul told the early Christians not to be afraid; Pope Paul VI gave the same message to today's bishops; "do not let your heart be distressed, or play the coward" (John 14/27).

### *Guidance from the Roman Curia to Pastoral Bishops*

Bishops in the field not only stand firm with the Pope; they should also be guided by light from the Roman Curia. It is not my part to enlarge on this, but I desire to recall some of the help so given in keeping the balance.

The Sacred Congregation for Teaching the Faith has provided outstanding assistance. The late Cardinal Franjo Seper, truly eminent and illustrious, was tireless in dissipating fog clouds spread by dissenting theologians over clear doctrine of Vatican II. Who does not recall with gratitude the declarations on the Church and its unity (1973), abortion (1974), sexual ethics (1975), the ordination of women (1976), the composition of altar bread for consecration at Mass (1976), the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body (1979)? His successor, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, has been of singular service to ecumenism in the English speaking world by his penetrating analysis and evaluation of the several agreed state-



ments composed by the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission on the Blessed Eucharist (Windsor 1970), Ministry and Ordination (Canterbury 1973), Authority (Venice 1976). He exposed the ambiguities and deficiencies of these statements and then pointed the way to true ecumenism. This declaration should stop a lot of woolly thinking in Australia and elsewhere.

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education has issued important statements on the theological, scriptural, canonical, pastoral and spiritual formation of priests. This is of vital importance for a pastoral bishop. We all know how the Tridentine Reform became a reality through the renewed formation of Catholic priests—thanks to the persevering zeal of men like Saint Charles Borromeo, Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Peter Canisius, Monsieur Olier and others. We need men of that calibre today if the renewal expected of Vatican II is to bear fruit.

Since 1963 the sacred Dicastery charged with the liturgy has issued some four hundred replies, declarations, clarifications, instructions (a miniature library) concerning our revised worship. Such voluminous output makes one ask how well thought out was the initial revision or how properly has it been handled. On Holy Thursday 1979 John Paul II offered public atonement for hierarchical negligence in not stopping abuses: do we hear episcopal responsibility to that papal psalm?

### *Need for Clear Statement of Traditional Faith*

Personal experience during the Council did alert me to the coming distortion of its real teaching: the approaching heady days of the spirit of the Council were to be accompanied by Satan's smoke billowing into the Church. Rather than dissertate on the Council I decided to make known the exact words of Vatican II so that the people of Sandhurst would know full well that their ancient Faith, with all of its truths and sound doctrine, has indeed been preserved.

When Paul VI's *Credo of the People of God* appeared in 1968 it was distributed in thousands and thousands of copies through all parishes and schools. It was so printed

more than once in the Diocese of Sandhurst. In that same year of 1968 I read carefully the Declaration of the Commission of Cardinals on the New (Dutch) Catechism. That declaration brought home to me the duty of prohibiting it from all schools. Some admirers of the Dutch Catechism say it has good points; that is so; but it has fatal points in abundance; just as one pinch of arsenic can be fatal to a Christmas dinner so can the doctrinal error in the Dutch Catechism destroy the whole Faith. I've never regretted banning it.

In 1970 I authorised the publication and distribution of a small book called *The Catholic Religion with Peter under Peter*. It is not a treatise or a catechism; it is simply a collection of about two hundred quotations from the text of Vatican II restating the unaltered and unalterable Truths of Faith beginning with the Unity and Trinity of God through the creation, elevation, fall and redemption of man to death and judgement (particular and general) and the final destiny of hell or heaven. The quotations are telling. They come as a painful shock to those who had been led to think such teachings had changed; they come as a strengthening to those who had refused to accept such misinterpretation but did not quite know how to counter it. They were delighted to know that what they had learned in the *Penny Catechism* was taught indeed by Vatican II.

For the interest of this assembly I submit a copy of *The Catholic Religion with Peter and under Peter* (it is one of the very, very few copies left to me; your Committee is welcome to it).

I also authorised for use in the diocese a catechetical magazine composed by one of the Sandhurst priests, Father William Batchelor P.P., for use in primary schools. It is called the *My Way to God Series*; all who have used it praise it.

The General Catechetical Directory of 1971 prompted me to issue a pastoral on religious formation in the home and school to which I added a directive for parents, teachers and priests; it was all published under the title *Grounded in the Faith—Handing on the Faith to School Pupils and Students*

One part deals with family and home religious training, a part that received special mention from Cardinal Seper. Another section treats of the devotional and liturgical practices to be fostered and the abuses to be shunned. This section aimed at keeping episcopal control over divine worship and warding off unlawful extravaganzas from the sanctuary.

The directive also named those catechetical series and works of certain authors which are not to be used in schools. These include the *Dutch Catechism*, the *Come to the Father Series*, the *Conscience and Concern Series*, the *Green Bay Series*, the *Discovery Series* et al.; the writings of Charles Curran on contraception, of Gabriel Moran, of Richard McCormick, of Raymond Brown especially on Christology, of Gregory Baum especially on the Church, of Hubert Richards, of Teilhard de Chardin, of Bernard Haering especially on contraception and the magisterium, et al. A pastoral bishop runs the risk of ridicule and opprobrium by casting aspersions on certain contemporary luminaries; but that is better than risking confusion and doubt of his people about their Faith.

The year 1975 saw the advent of *The Catholic Catechism* by Father John Hardon S.J. and of *The Teachings of Christ* edited by Father Donald Wuerl and Father Ronald Lawlor O.F.M. Cap. I procured copies of these for all the Clergy and strongly recommended their use to teachers and senior pupils.

### *Balance In The Moral Arena*

The wickedness of contraception, abortion, divorce, drug addiction, homosexuality has become the moral scourge of the age: Catholics are not immune from defilement. The immense injustices in economics, finance, politics, industry have brought forth hunger and famine to millions and have given rise to violence, rapine, murder, terrorism, war. Truly does the Book of Proverbs say "sin makes nations miserable" (Proverbs 14/34).

From these dreadful evils I single out three which are so harmful to innocent children, either by denying life or

corrupting life: contraception, abortion, sex education in schools.

*As regards contraception:* On three different occasions the Bishops of Australia have jointly endorsed *Humanae Vitae*.

In 1968 they said:

Every member of the Church must be considered bound to accept the declaration of the Pope. To refuse to do so would be a grave act of disobedience.

In September 1974 they said:

The Pope described every contraceptive action as intrinsically wrong and always illicit . . . a priest may never teach contrary to the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* that contraception in any circumstances is objectively good.

In September 1976 the Episcopal Conference repeated that this teaching is authentic and authoritative and that it excludes the possibility of any theological opinion to the contrary.

The bishops obviously knew that despite acceptance of *Humanae Vitae* in word or principle some were denying it in fact. To keep this dissent from the sacramental field the Sandhurst pagella for priests and confessors had enjoined:

Administration of the Sacrament of Penance must be in accord with the constant teaching of the Church on marriage, particularly as regards contraception, and confirmed by Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*. If a confessor acts to the contrary absolution is invalid; visiting priests seeking faculties to hear confessions must be apprised of and accept this condition necessary for absolution.

In order to help married couples avoid contraceptive practices I have encouraged Doctors John and Lyn Billings from the very beginning of their research into ovulation and its detection. Their investigations have resulted in a morally acceptable method of family births. Sandhurst has several instructional centres for this method so helpful to Catholic spouses and such a valuable contribution to medical science.

*As regards abortion:* The bishops of Australia have been outspoken in their public condemnation of abortion



and in their opposition to any attempt by civil authority to permit what can be called "abortion on demand". Though they have not succeeded, as yet, in stopping what is euphemistically called therapeutic abortion they have halted abortion on demand. Such a bill, favoured by the then prime minister, was put before the national parliament in 1973. This called for opposition with bite. I made a public declaration that the proposed measure would be a licence for murder of the innocent and totally defenceless; that any parliamentarian supporting it would be favouring something gravely offensive to Almighty God, to be condemned as mortally sinful; that any citizen voting for a candidate of such intention would share in the evil. The media highlighted the word 'sin'. It had telling effect; the bill was defeated, the prime minister was furious; it has not been reintroduced to the federal parliament of Australia.

One of the finest anti-abortion speeches given that day in parliament was made by a sterling Catholic, Mr. John Martyr: it would serve as a model for any deputy anywhere.

It is good to know that the ordinary public still counts the term sin as having the form of sound words, quite clear in conveying what is meant; far more than the lack lustre "failed to love", or phrases of like ilk.

My own several statements on abortion have been published elsewhere, for example in the *Osservatore Romano* and in *Christian Order*, produced by Father Paul Crane, S.J.

*As regards sex education in schools:* Sex education in the classroom has become the frontline way of destroying a child's sense of modesty and reserve regarding the origins of human life. It enervates the moral fibre of the adolescent until youth falls an easy prey to lust and impurity. This deliberate programme is sometimes blatant, sometimes insidious under the guise of humanism. The Siecus Circle by Claire Chambers has documented the story of evil and deception. Ample evidence shows that it has infiltrated some Catholic schools; only the blind or duped do not see it.

When Bishop of Sandhurst I repeatedly forbade, in writing, this type of instruction for schools, especially before mixed classes of girls and boys.

That does not mean that children and youth were to be deprived of knowledge of sexual matters. On the contrary I maintained they have a right to it and I agree wholeheartedly with the Church's view on where and how and from whom they should receive it. I concur fully with Vatican II:

As they grow older children should receive a positive and prudent education in matters relating to sex (*Gravissimum Educationis* I).

and this should be imparted above all in the home:

It is imperative to give suitable and timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their families, about the dignity of married love, its role and its exercise (*Gaudium et Spes* 49).

There is nothing vague here. Sex education is imperative; it includes knowledge of married love; its exercise (male and female); its role (procreation or transmission of life); its candour and delicacy; so far removed from the blatant eroticism purveyed by some; its measure (prudent and positive); its dignity (mutual respect between husband and wife with reverence for the Creator); its regard for the mother and father (the school teacher and the civil authority are not to usurp their place).

Such information is to be accompanied by the teaching method outlined by the Holy Office of 21st March, 1931. Briefly sex education is to be part of formation in modesty, purity, chastity.

In 1978 I issued a pastoral statement on *Formation In Chastity of Children and School Pupils*. It has received some notice. It has been translated for the archdiocese of San Paolo in Brazil, for missionaries in India and South Africa; it was reprinted by C.U.F. and also by *Mirror of Justice* of the Catholic Lawyers' Guild of Rockville Center diocese.

Rather than occupy more time with relating its contents I submit to you a copy of this pastoral with full permission to use it or reproduce it as you wish.

These are some of the things I did and some of the means I used in striving to keep balance for fourteen years following the Second Vatican Council.

In conclusion let me state briefly three things of vital importance.

First, in the field of Faith, God's revelation of the truth of original sin must be firmly and clearly upheld. Paul VI did this so firmly; reminding the world what it means. Without this truth to guide us we would soon fall into error about Redemption, the Incarnation, the Church and all other dogmas flowing from the hierarchy of truths.

Second, in the field of morals, the negative absolute must be upheld firmly and never yield to the relativism of situation ethics or consequentialism.

Third, we must pray daily, especially "forgive us our trespasses"; Christ died to give us the Sacrament of Penance. Yet His precious gift has been tossed aside so carelessly by so many: unless we receive its grace frequently, as Vatican II said, sin can only more abound. The final gift I offer to this assembly is a copy of a Directive on the *Confessional and Confession* for the Diocese of Sandhurst in 1976.

Let me leave as valedictory these words of the Apostle of distant lands: words Pro Roma Cattolica:

My prayer is that you may be filled with that closer knowledge of God's will which brings all wisdom and all spiritual insight with it. May you live as befits his servants, waiting continually on his pleasure; may the closer knowledge of God bring you fruitfulness and growth in all good. May you be inspired as his glorious power can inspire you, with full strength to be patient and to endure; to endure joyfully . . . (Colossians 1/10-12).

**We are grateful to the Latin Mass Society for permission to reprint the address delivered by Lord Rawlinson at the Annual General Meeting of the Society on June 18th of this year 1982.**

## **The Mass of Our Fathers**

**“IT is a great pleasure to be here, Mr. Chairman” he continued. “I always wanted to be here when your predecessor, Mr. Marnau, was in the Chair; but it was never possible. So I am very glad to be here at last following that great and, may I emphasise, lawful Mass which we heard sung with such beauty and splendour, evoking in all of our hearts the memories of times gone past—in different places, in different parts of the world.**

**I think of the occasions when I have heard Mass. Not once, but many times during the war in North Africa when Abbot Brookes offered the Holy Sacrifice on ammunition boxes; all the great Masses in India, Europe and in Asia and today we celebrate at this meeting and after this morning’s Mass the continuation of a great tradition.**

**None of us could have foreseen the shocks and sadness we have witnessed over the past years. But, you are keeping alive a devotion which must and will be kept alive. Your loyalty, of which the Chairman has spoken, keeps alive the hope, principally in this country, of a return to that great tradition of which we are the representatives.**

**Practically everybody in this hall—either themselves or through their families—was brought up in that ancient discipline. When I was at school at Downside in the thirties the heroes of the day were G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Many, at the turn of the century and in the early part of this century, witnessed the great debates between H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw on one side and, on the other, Chester-Belloc as they were known.**



The difference between those two great Catholics was best illustrated by the stories about them. Chesterton, a great, fat, enormous man, used to tell the story about himself during the first World War. He was walking down the street when a lady came up to him and, giving him a white feather, said: "Why aren't you out at the front?" He raised his hat and replied "Madam, if you go round to the side, you will see that I am!"

The story Frank Sheed used to tell about Belloc was entirely different. It was in Westminster Cathedral. Belloc was standing at the back during the Canon of the Mass. An usher approached him and said, "Excuse me Sir, we always kneel at the Canon". Belloc turned to him and said "Go to Hell!" The man said "I beg your pardon. I didn't realise you were a Catholic". Two truly remarkable men, these heroes of my youth and, I am sure, of some of yours.

Belloc said "The Faith is Europe and Europe is the Faith". Times of course can change and have changed since that remark by an extraordinary man. We all know that, with the movement in the world; the ability to cross oceans and continents, it was inevitable that change in attitudes and in forms would follow. That, I think, most of us would accept. But that the change should have taken the form that it has is what causes distress. Is it so sure that it has been guided by wisdom? Of course, it will be claimed that it was the presence of the Holy Ghost which guided the deliberations of those making the decisions. I recollect that a distinguished Irish barrister called Patrick Kelly, a member of the old Munster Circuit, said of the Irish Bishops: "The Irish bishops are individually virtuous and sapient men, wise in precept and impeccable in practice but", he said, "it is a great misfortune that they should always fix their meetings for an occasion when the Holy Ghost happens to be engaged elsewhere". That was said long before the troubles which have affected us over the past twenty-five years and was, of course, meant as a jest.

One thing we must always be careful of and, I suggest to you in this Society and to other groups within our Church, that is to distinguish between the argument and the man. It is too common in modern times to identify the man

with the argument. You can have fierce and vigorous disagreement but only a foolish person trivialises his argument by attacks on individuals. Argument is not won by the levelling of insults or the knocking of heads but by capturing the intelligence, the wit and the hearts of others. I say this to you because I have been struck by the sometimes virulent and intemperate language levelled against people whose views differ from those of the particular majority or authority of the time. I accept it is not all on one side. There have been lapses in good sense and courtesy on the part of those whose ideas we represent here this afternoon. It is a mistake. We have certainly not received a great measure of courtesy or Christian charity from those who disagree with us but I beg you to continue the argument—to continue the battle—loyal to the Church of which we are all members but with the determination to present our point of view so that our voice shall be heard. And it will be heard the better if we do it in the spirit of Christian charity.

Recently I was engaged in expressing an opinion about the rightness of a priest engaged in what I held to be full-time political activity. Whether others agreed or not, mine was a legitimate, and not unreasonable, point of view. I could not help but be sorrowful at the reaction and the language of some of those who disagreed; apart from personal attacks and a total lack of courtesy by some who ought to know better, who have received the great mark, which we acknowledge, of the priesthood.

I think, therefore, I can speak with a certain authority when I beg this Society and all those associated with it to meet an attack of any kind always with great courtesy but also with great determination — determination that our voice will be heard and will be coupled with loyalty, discipline and respect.

To us, the Liturgy is, of course, the expression of our faith. It is for us, the laity, who do not possess the grace and blessing of the priesthood, the most important and vital moment in our ordinary lives, the central arch of our faith. The Mass differs from every other kind of religious service because there is something so remarkable, so wonderful—a man is given the great power enabling him to change

bread and wine into the living God. So remarkable, so wonderful is it that, when it is accompanied by, or in the context of triviality or frivolousness, the resultant feeling is one of shock and horror.

I recollect attending, with my children, Mass in New England, America, some years ago. A young girl came forward and said: "Well now, let us welcome my friend and your friend, Father Chuck..." Father "Chuck" would in a very short time be able to do that which he was empowered to do by the gift bestowed on him. Do they not realise that, because we are all fallible human beings, because we have not received particular gifts, that greatest of actions must be surrounded by all the awesome reverence which is its due? The Mass in which we were privileged to share this morning demonstrated the greatness of that action. Many of us have the impression that, for some of those who are given this power, this grace that enables them to make the Living God present upon the altar has lost its importance. It is not accompanied by that reverence which was there before and which is its due.

And why is it that we have to suffer? Why in one part of the country may we have a Cathedral in which we still see incense rising and sing the Credo while, in a great Abbey church not many miles away, we have a full Anglican service unrecognisable as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? Our Anglican friends used to say to us: "You are so lucky. When you go to a Catholic Church you know exactly what will happen. We have to decide whether a High Church or Low Church has the service that suits us". Is that what has happened to us to our bewilderment?

Dean Inge once said "There are no Christian politics; no Christian economics. There is only a Christian standard of value and a Christian law of love". This is a point, I think, we could validly make. It is essential to make our voice heard; essential that it should be done at all times; essential that this Organisation which has fought and struggled so well under such good leadership for these past years should keep living. I beg those who feel so strongly that they cannot "keep their cool"; who feel that at times they must burst into vituperation equalling that of those who oppose us—I beg you to be restrained. Such action can so easily

be taken and used as an illustration of the beliefs and ideals of the Society and others associated with it. And, as you know, this Society has fought and struggled always within the law.

I would remind those who disagree with us of the words of Father McNabb many years ago: "In the great temple of truth which is the Church of God there are two gates—the gate of wisdom and the gate of beauty. I am inclined to think that the narrow gate is the gate of wisdom and the wide gate through which millions pass is the gate of beauty". That we should throw away the traditions of beauty which, since the sixteenth century, have been sounding within the great Cathedrals and churches of Europe; that the great music of plainchant should have ceased to be sung in Abbeys and Priories—the plainchant which, after the Catholic Renaissance, came back to this country with the rebuilding of Abbeys and Monasteries; that great song in praise of God no longer rises. It is a matter of great distress.

I would ask you to remember that that great tradition of music is the European tradition. In modest little churches in poverty-stricken areas like South America, a guitar and simple hymns may be appropriate. But for us, our tradition is the great beauty and music of the Church

I beg you to continue to play your part of observing, warning, commenting and representing. I hope you will represent your views to those Commissions who advise the Bishops because it is upon their advice that so many pronouncements are made. Keep your loyalty and affection for the Cardinal who leads us. Pray for him in the difficulties which he faces and must face, being torn between one side and the other. He needs our prayers. Let us keep our loyalty to the Church and our belief in Her but never let us falter in seeking our aim.

Your Chairman has saluted you this afternoon. It comes better from me because I can salute him and all of you who play a great role in the Church. I beg you to continue.



The following is an address by Cardinal Silvio Oddi, Prefect of the S. Congregation for the Clergy, delivered on 9 July 1983, in Arlington, Virginia, U.S.A.

# The Right of the Catechized to the Truth

SILVIO CARDINAL ODDI

IF I were given the opportunity to choose an area to visit in the United States around the Fourth of July, I would probably pick Virginia, the site of the first permanent English settlement of what was to become your United States of America. As it happened, I did not have the opportunity to choose, but Divine Providence did, through the Diocese of Arlington and Mons. Eugene Kevane of the Notre Dame Institute in Middleburg. So here I am, though a few days late for the fireworks, which on the other hand, may follow what I have to say.

I have been invited, as you well know, to speak on a subject which falls under my responsibility on the government of the Church as Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, and which by its very nature, is of intense interest to you as catechists or parents dedicated to transmitting the faith to those under your charge, namely, the subject of **catechetics**.

Catechesis is the art of maturing initial faith and educating true disciples of Christ (1). In this strict sense of the term it is the process of making more explicit personal attachment to Jesus, the Truth (Jn 14:6), after baptism. But the word catechetics is used also in a wider sense and, taken together with all its implication, it is an extensive subject indeed. So, I have decided to limit myself to one aspect of it, an aspect which, it seems to me, is timely in this age which loves pluralism in its every manifestation: "The Right of the Catechized to the Truth".

At first glance, this declaration may seem as self-evident as the phrase on the American dollar "In God We Trust". Everyone, not only Americans, must trust in God, and everyone, not only the catechized, has the right to the truth. The fact is, however, as we well know, not everyone trusts in God, nor is everyone's right to the truth honoured. So, in the area of catechesis, it is necessary to examine the right of every man, woman and child to hear the truth about God, and the corollary of this right, the obligation of the Church to ensure that God's truth is faithfully communicated.

In missionary countries, one who is striving to deepen his or her initial faith is often called a catechumen. But those who have not even been baptized and are meeting the doctrine of the faith for the first time are also called catechumens. In the older local Churches we even speak of "adult catechetics", "catechism for adults" and other such phrases which reveal that in popular usage, the word catechetics is employed to indicate passing on the Word of God at almost any level to almost any age group, to baptized as well as aspirants to baptism. Hence, in this broad sense, we are all catechumens, you and I, just as much as the Korean housewife meeting Jesus for the first time. Let us look, then, at what we have a right to be taught.

## FOUR MARKS OF TRUTH

In your remrakable Baltimore Catechism, published originally over a century ago, and responsible in no small part for the theological formation, the fidelity and sanctity of the Church in this country, Americans learned that the four marks of the Church are : unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity (2). This is still true and always will be. The Church is one, not many; she is holy, not sinful; she is universal, not national; she is apostolic in direction and not guided by private interpretation.

It seems to me that these same four marks are, with the proper adaptation, characteristic also of truth, and I would like to examine each one of them in that regard. My treatment of them, however, will not be equal, in the sense that equal time will be given to each, because I shall devote most of the time available to a consideration of the first

mark, the unity and integrity of truth, as a necessary sign of authentic doctrine, and as an aid to clarifying the nature of permitted pluralism.

Part of the American cultural and moral heritage is your respect for a man's word. One tends to find that a man's word here is truly his bond. This presumption that one tells the truth is reinforced also in the oath which witnesses take in your courts to bind themselves before God to tell the truth, and not only the truth but "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth". Even on the civil level, the integrity of the truth is revered among you. For a statement to be considered true in your courts it must contain the full truth and remain free of falsehood. If it is integrally true or if it contains error along with truth, it is not good enough for judge and jury. *A fortiori*, incomplete statements about the faith, or statements of the truth combined with erroneous matter, are not good enough for those studying the Word of God.

If you will forgive me a moment of pedantry, I should like to make this point stronger by calling your attention to the Greek word for truth. It is *alétheia*. Now the Greek word *létheia* means "forgetting". When it is preceded by alpha privitive (a), it means "truth", that is, *not forgetting*. For the Greeks, too, the fathers of logic, telling the truth meant not forgetting, not leaving out anything that should be there.

If an essential aspect of a statement is omitted, therefore, regardless of how much truth it may hold, the statement is false, as not a few students have discovered to their chagrin when taking true and false examinations.

## APPLYING THIS PRINCIPLE TO CATECHETICS

Let me offer a few examples of how this principle should govern catechetics. If we teach the catechumen that Jesus was born of Mary of Nazareth but do not specify that she was a virgin (Lk 1:22) our teaching is not true because it is not complete, it does not contain the whole truth. The virginity of Mary is an essential element of the divine economy which redeemed mankind through the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. If Jesus had not been conceived of a virgin, his father would have been

human. But we know that it was the Holy Spirit who "overshadowed" Mary (Lk 1:35). The virginity of Mary is, then, a necessary background for the avenue the Almighty chose to effect our salvation.

Jesus is both true God and true Man (Nicean Creed). He was tempted and suffered for us (3) which only as man was he capable of doing. He was able to atone for our sins, which only as the Eternal Word of God (Jn 1:1) was he capable of achieving; so what we say or do not say about the Virgin Mother of God must be consonant with other essential doctrines of our faith. Good Christology is also good Mariology.

If we teach that Jesus was the most perfect man that ever lived, we rightly emphasize his humanity and his sinlessness and thus are able to explain to our students that Jesus understands what man is, and that they themselves, with his help, are capable of resisting temptation and imitating his loving example. But we must simultaneously emphasize that he is also God (Jn 8:58), for otherwise the Redemption becomes logically and theologically impossible and Christianity collapses. Unless he is God, Jesus is incapable of reconciling man with his Father.

### DEFICIENT DOCTRINE PROPOSED

Too many catecumens today, however, are receiving only a part of the doctrine of faith. There is a veritable antipathy in some quarters against catechetical texts that state unequivocally the doctrine of faith. This may be why young people are neglecting their religious duties, as correspondence coming into my office from some parts of the world informs that they are. It is clear that, if we teach only that the Apostles saw Jesus after his death, but do not mention the graphic details of his eating broiled fish (Lk 24:42), nor the invitation to Thomas to put a fist into the divine side (Jn 20:27), nor the meeting of Mary Magdalen who at first did not recognize him, so unprepared was she for his return (Jn 20:14), then the catechized are being denied their right to the whole truth. Why is this so? Because we are leaving them exposed to current half-truths about the bodily resurrection of Christ which, in a laudable



effort to avoid exaggeration in Scriptural interpretation give, in effect, a distorted view of the Gospel story, and deprive the student of a full picture of the resurrection of Christ. The whole truth is, of course, that the Apostles did not hallucinate. Jesus rose from the dead in fact, body and soul, was seen by many, ate with some, convinced even those who at first doubted that it was he, and subsequently ascended into heaven. No hallucinations at all, reality (cf. Acts 10:40-43).

What fundamentally is truth? Pilate was troubled by the same question and philosophers through the ages have grappled with it. Truth is the conformity of the mind to external reality. Truth demands, therefore, submission to some reality outside oneself, and this is the rub. Man wants to establish what is true and what is not, all by himself without reference to any thing or any one outside of him; we remain sons of Adam, heirs of his deviant self-centred propensities. But truth is not, of course, determined by personal opinion, it rests on objective reality. Not far from this spot, as a matter of fact, Pope John Paul II defined truth as "a surrender to reality" (4).

We are called upon always to make this surrender to truth, particularly to Divine Truth, but often, like Pilate, we cynically try to avoid it or even, like Satan, stand in blatant rebellion moved by a pride that will yield neither to man to God. Some religious truths are not easy to accept, either because they demand a curbing of strong human instinct or because our limited reason is too weak to grasp them, but God expects acceptance anyway, the acceptance of faith. We remember how Jesus looked sadly after those who left him when he told the crowds he would give them the Eucharist, his flesh to eat and his Blood to drink. Some found it a "hard saying" and walked away (Jn 6:60), but Peter and the Apostles stayed with him, as we must also.

## THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

Revealed truth is not something we arrive at by reason but by faith. It is the will that must push the reason to

accept, not because the concept is totally understood by the mind, but because God has revealed it and we must trust him. The young must be taught to study the doctrine of the Church through eyes of faith, and they must be taught what God has revealed, which it goes without saying, is much more important than what they themselves are able to deduce from the analysis of a dramatic picture in a textbook.

Catechists, therefore, must be extremely careful not to censor the Word of God. God has not taught man anything that will hurt him. Anyone who attempts to block the march of the innocent toward the full truth is destroying the child's very reason for existence and contradicting the very purpose of the Incarnation: to rescue man from the father of lies and present him to the Father of Truth. By making man and woman to his likeness (Gen 1:26), God gave every human being the right to the truth, that is, to a knowledge of him as he is, undistorted by human attempts to reduce the Creator to the level of creature.

There is, naturally, the corresponding obligation among those charged with the formation of the young to respect the right of their charges to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but, carefully distinguishing the teaching of the Church from human opinion. Our present Holy Father bluntly reminded teachers of religion: "Theologians and exegetes have a duty to take great care that people do not take for a certainty what, on the contrary, belongs to the area of questions of opinion or discussions among the experts . . . (Catechists) must refuse to trouble the minds of the young at this (early) stage of their catechesis with outlandish theories, useless questions and unproductive discussions, things that St. Paul often condemned in his pastoral letters (5).

## MINDS OPENED TO CLOSE ON SOMETHING

Some teachers of religion today seem to spend more time giving their charges exercises in "reading readiness" than on teaching them solid doctrine. Good teachers do not spend the entire class getting children interested, leaving little time to get across the matter at hand. Possibly the

teacher is not at fault, but the person who prepared a syllabus devoid of content. The Trinity cannot be mentioned because the child will not understand it. Sin cannot be mentioned because the child will acquire a guilt complex. Hell cannot be mentioned because the child will be traumatized. The evil of divorce cannot be mentioned because so many of the child's relatives are. Possibly pictures, films and discussions have become necessary to fill in the time unoccupied by a presentation of the Word of God. But, once opened, the little mind must be given something substantial on which to close. No catechist has the right to deny the child knowledge of the fundamentals of the faith. A teacher unable to teach about the Fall, the Redemption, sin, grace, judgment, heaven and hell without traumatizing his or her pupils is not worthy of his or her salt. Sometimes children are taught at too early an age things it would be better if they did *not* know, while at the same time being denied knowledge of things they *should* know at *every* age.

Do not become alarmed, my friends, I have not fallen into a currently stylish fundamentalism, forgetting: "Love one another just as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34) or, "In my father's house there are many mansions" (Jn 14:2). But can one understand the Hail Mary without knowing what sin is? All I am asking is that the child be given the full Gospel and taught all ten of the commandments, for no one can love God without knowing in what the love of God consists: "If you love me, keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). The mild, beloved short-lived Pope John Paul I chose to tell the bishops of the Philippines on the last day of his life: "One of the greatest rights of the faithful is to receive the Word of God in all its purity and *integrity*" (6).

There are, of course, many areas of theology and biblical studies where the truth may not be clear to the human mind and where the Church has not pronounced. Here a pluralism of opinion is acceptable in the proper forum, but even here pluralism has its limits. An opinion cannot be true if it contradicts a certainty. The philosophers warn: *non est negandum notum propter ignotum*. One may not deny the known in order to discover the unknown. If a denial of what the Church holds as certain is necessary to

unlock a "new truth", where does that take us? Obviously, the "new truth" is false. So any given phrase of Scripture or the Magisterium must be interpreted, not in isolation, but in the context of the entire deposit of faith.

## TRUTH IS HOLY

We now move on to the second mark of truth; it is holy. Truth is holy because God is truth. "I am the truth", Jesus told us (Jn 14:6). Nothing that is true is a threat to the dignity, to the sanctification of man. Everything that God has done and has made is intended for man's sanctification if used by man according to the demands of his nature and according to divine teaching. Our bodies, nature in general, scientific discoveries are all good in themselves. The evaluation of the morality of their use, however, depends on whether or not a particular use contributes to realizing the purpose for which God created man.

The Church is not afraid of truth, any kind of truth, because God *is* truth, but at the same time the circumstances of imparting truth to the young must be taken into careful consideration by the intelligent teacher. Truth is similar to good food, in one respect at least, it must be taken in proper doses and in palatable form if it is properly to nourish the individual. I am told that babies, for example, are not to be fed chunks of *filet mignon*. Similarly, in teaching the young about human sexuality, great care must be taken to present the matter in degree and in form proportional to the capacity of the recipients.

It has never ceased to amaze me that this generation which boasts of having made such great strides in understanding human psychology, does not seem to understand what our great-grandparents instinctively knew, namely, that anything touching human reproduction is extremely stimulating for the young. Consequently, to respect the human body, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who lives in men and women and in boys and girls sanctified by divine grace, great care must be taken to suit the presentation of biological, social and theological information about human reproduction to the emotional, intellectual and physiological condition of the catechized. Reverence for man, respect



for the holiness of truth, regard for the instinctive, protective modesty of the young will dictate the teacher's approach.

After all, truth will make us free (Jn 8:32). If a truth conveyed leads man to become a slave of his passion, there is nothing wrong with the truth, but with the manner in which it was presented. A teacher is not a movie camera or a computer projecting what has been put into him or her. The teacher is a thinking person equipped to communicate a message in the manner best adapted to the students. It is an indication of the enormous confidence God himself has in men and women that he has entrusted to us the vital and delicate task of communicating to mankind his truths of various kinds, rather than revealing them directly to each individual. We must respect that confidence by our honesty in teaching.

### TRUTH IS CATHOLIC OR UNIVERSAL

The truth is catholic, that is, universal. It does not depend on geography, politics or race, or even history. Sometimes we are inclined to think that truth changes with the passage of years. The atom, for example, used to be the smallest particle of matter. Then someone came along and split it, so it no longer is. Is not this scientific proof that truths change? Of course not. It is not truth that changed, it is man who erred in the first instance. Man *thought* the atom to be the smallest particle, but, in truth, it wasn't. Many things we call "scientific truths" are only theories. For example, some scientists say that I evolved from tropical fish. I consider that a theory rather than a truth, because, for one thing, they are prettier.

Similarly, in the field of Catholic doctrine we must be precise in the use of the very word "truth". Christian *truth* never changes, but everything churchmen teach is not unchangeable truth. What Christ taught, what has been divinely revealed *is* the truth and is just as much true in Paris as it is in Preoria. We often call the sum total of this the deposit of the faith. Even the Magisterium of the Church cannot change what God has taught. That is one reason why marriage will remain indissoluble, because Jesus proclaimed it so. The Church cannot change that.

But in the field of worship, in the organization of various religious activities, in works of penance, holy days and so forth, there is often room for changes according to local circumstances and the needs of a particular time in history. In these areas, there is room for legitimate argument over the propriety, the need, the efficacy of making adaptations. That is what Vatican Council II was all about, that is, it was a pastoral Council of the Church intended to bring methods, emphases, approaches in the apostolate up to date to meet the needs of the times. None of the updating touched the deposit of the faith. You used to say *Credo in unum Deum*. Now you say: *I believe in one God*. The language is different but the truth remains the same. The priest used to face the back wall of the church at Mass. Now he faces the people. But the ministerial priesthood is still the same and not to be confused with the priesthood of the faithful.

Recent innovations in the Church have confused some people unnecessarily. Many times the reasons behind the changes were not explained clearly and seldom was the distinction between the substance and the accidents of the faith made clear to the faithful. Of course, there have not been lacking those who were unwilling to stop at prescribed changes and went on to institute substantial changes on their own initiative, for example, offering the Eucharist to those who do not believe that Christ is truly present in that sacrament. But such exaggerations do not invalidate the legitimate need for periodic improvements in the pastoral life of the Church.

## TRUTH IS APOSTOLIC

The fourth mark of the Church's truth is its apostolicity. This means that the deposit of faith, as distinguished from merely disciplinary and organizational norms, must be traceable back to apostolic times. The Church teaches that all that is necessary for salvation is to be found in the Scriptures and Tradition ending in apostolic times (7), or, as a convenient date, at the death of the last surviving Apostle, St. John the Evangelist. The apostolicity of Catholic truth is an extremely useful measure of orthodoxy,

because any teaching that contradicts what the Apostles taught is automatically to be rejected. As we saw above, truth is one. Since the apostolic truth is sure, anything contrary to it is to be excluded from our doctrine.

Everything the Apostles taught could not have been totally clear even to them for they, too, lived by faith as do all just men (Rom 1:17). They passed on to the Church and to us what they had learned from Christ, who, in turn, had been sent by his Father. Through the centuries there has taken place a gradual unfolding of Christ's original teaching (8). Cardinal John Henry Newman called it "The Development of Doctrine". And Catholic doctrine is still developing, as we would expect, because the Eternal Truth is bottomless and provides endless food for human contemplation. However, development is not new revelation; development is not a change in the essential meaning of the word. Development is a flowering, a growth in implication, in understanding, in application always faithful to the original Word. To test, then, the purity of a given doctrine, it must be traceable back to apostolic teaching. We do not say traceable back to the Scriptures themselves, because "many things Jesus did and taught which are not written in this book" (Jn 21:25). It is not, however, the right of the individual Christian authoritatively to interpret apostolic teaching, for "the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone" (9).

## CONSCIENCE

At this point one might ask where one's own conscience comes into play in all this. We are told we must follow our conscience. But if our conscience tells us to do one thing and the Church another which are we to choose?

Here we must make a distinction between fact and good will. If a motorist is stopped by a policeman for going through a red light, he might say in all honesty: "I did not see it". The motorist may be as innocent as a lamb before God, but the fact is that he broke the law.

Somewhat the same situation exists in the moral law. Just as a motorist has the obligation to look for traffic

lights, so men and women have the obligation to look for the norms of conduct which the Church teaches. Everyone has the obligation to form, to educate his or her conscience in a Christian manner. If one finds that he or she does not agree with the Church on a given point and deliberately acts contrary to the Church's teaching, that is something that will have to be taken up at the Last Judgment. When the Divine Judge asks: "Did you know the Church taught such and such?", will one have the courage to reply: "Yes, I did, Lord, but I did not agree". On the other hand, if one breaks God's law through honest error there is no guilt involved.

## CONCLUSION

My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, you and I have the obligation as catechists to teach the truth to the young and to all those who come to us for advice and guidance in their struggle to reach eternal life. We are not sent by the Church to preach ourselves or our own opinions but "Jesus Christ and him crucified". (1 Cor 3:2). We have the obligation to help our catechumens build firm foundations on which to construct their spiritual lives. Good foundations are not built with cracked bricks, watered-down mortar and crooked guidelines. Teach the solid truth; teach the whole truth; teach nothing but the truth, undiluted with things which men and women with "itching ears" like to hear (2 Tim 4:3). For the Word of God is Truth himself and the young who come to you have a right bought by the Blood of Christ to know him as he wants to be known, as "a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower". (Jn 1:15).

## NOTES

1. Pope John Paul II Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 10 (Oct. 16, 1979).
2. "A Catechism of Christian Doctrine". Revised edition of the Baltimore Catechism No. 2, St. Anthony Guild Press. Peterson, N.Y. 1962 p. 29.
3. Roman Breviary. Antiphon for Lent.
4. Pope John Paul II, Talk to the Faculty of Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., October 10, 1979.
5. Pope John Paul II. *Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 61. 1 Tim 6:22 ff.
6. Pope John Paul I, Talk on occasion of *ad limina* visit of Philippine Bishops to the Holy See, 28 Sept. 1979.
7. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, nn. 4 and 8.
8. *Ibidem*, nn. 8 and 24.
9. *Ibidem*, n. 10.



Three of the contributors to a recent Symposium edited by Robert Nowell and published by Collins at £4.95 reveal all too plainly in their writing the liberal-secularist mentality at present besetting so many within the Church. Father Crane offers his comments.

## CURRENT COMMENT

# Belief versus Reason

THE EDITOR

I came late to a book entitled, *Why I Am Still a Catholic*, edited by Robert Nowell and published last year, 1982. Having read it very recently, I am not too sorry that I did come late to it, for the story this book tells is an old one. It lies, I would suggest, at the heart of the trouble that besets the Church today. The lesson it carries needs to be taken to heart by every one of us at the present time. The story is of men and women adrift from their origins in God; not repudiating those origins, but disinclined to refer their daily lives to them. In this sense, rootless. Not through malice; but through failure to advert to the significance of those origins in their daily living. Their assent to them is at the best notional, not real; academic rather than felt within their very being; without any vital realization of the inevitable consequence of those origins, which is found in man's total dependence on God. Out of which comes man's obligation to serve Him; which means bending his will to God's command.

### *The Crunch*

The crunch is here. At this point the liberal syndrome. Is God to be served—life lived by man on God's terms or his? Obviously God's — in theory; but in practice? Man is free. He is *able* to choose what he wants; but *obliged* to choose what God wants, precisely because of his total dependence on God. Obviously, if he loses sight of his

dependence on God, man will tend to go in his choosing not for what God wants, but for what he wants himself. The idea is that the two should coincide. Their failure so often to do so is the lot of human nature, destabilized by the sin of our First Parents (the first to choose what they wanted in opposition to God), out of true within itself, incapable of recognizing constantly and clearly the totality of its dependence on God; without the inclination, therefore, to seek through prayer and the sacraments Christ's redemptive Grace through which alone — in the case of the individual Catholic — there can be effected that coincidence between God's will and his own, which is the key to the Christian life.

### *The Liberal Mentality*

What is called the liberal or secularist mentality comes out of the individual's failure to realise his total dependence on God and to set his lyife within its ambit. Instead, he would make his life on his own terms, not God's. Inevitably, he steps into the confusion which, at present, pervades not merely the West, but so many within the Catholic Church in the West. The confusion is between freedom and autonomy. Man, indeed, is free to choose, but the fact of his total dependence on God demands that his choosing be set within the framework of God's law in his regard. Out of this comes that freedom or harmony of being, which is the key to true happiness on this earth. It cannot be attained without the strength that comes from the Grace of God. For the Christian, free choice is not an end in itself. It is essentially a means to freedom or harmony of being. To be right, it must be set under God. For the liberal (no reference to the English political Party) or secularist it cannot be. The reason is simple. He is without that recognition of his dependence on God and of God's place in his life that would set his living in tune with his dependence. He is adrift from his moorings. For the secularist, freedom of choice is not a means, but an end in itself. It is his power, as master of his choices, to do what he wants that he identifies with freedom. What the Christian finds in the submission of himself to God's will, the liberal secularist seeks to find in self-assertion. The one

would set his life, his work and his Church more securely each day in the image of God. The other would recast all three in the image of man; which means that he would have all three on his own terms, not God's. He is drawn by the logic of his wrong-headedness to want nothing else.

### *Liberal-Secularist Mentality within the Church*

Where the Catholic Church is concerned, I would say that the confusion in it that has passed for renewal during its post-conciliar years is due, at base, to the liberal-secularist mentality which has taken hold primarily of clergy and religious (high and low) since well before the Council; increasingly in its wake. The endeavour has been to remake the Church in the image of man; to suit it to what appears the mood of the moment. That, after all, is what neo-Modernism is. Significantly, the liberal-secularist mentality has not touched in depth the mass of the Faithful in the West (to which alone this article has reference). What passes for renewal has been imposed on them, very often against their deepest, often unformulated convictions. They have accepted out of obedience what they do not recognise in their hearts. With their children, inevitably, it is a different story. These have been victimized by a religious teaching that appears as making man, not God, the centre of all things. They have come to adulthood without knowledge of the supernatural and its significance in their living. Inevitably, their outlook is secularist; their attitude to religion, something to be set within their own terms. Church and Papal Authority are measured only in terms of their relevance; which means their ability to meet the desires of the contemporary generation. They see the Church's task as that of blessing what is; not saying what should be. In a word and where they are concerned, God is made for man, not man for God. God is what you make him and so is His truth. Small wonder so many of them say they do not see any need for the Church, which for them is more of a hindrance than a help to Christ, Whom they are more inclined to see as the bewildered pop-kid of "Jesus Christ Superstar" than as the Son of God. For this I do not blame them one bit. They are only expressing in their lives what they have been taught so wrongly to believe. For this, their

teachers — particularly men and women religious — will have to reckon one day with the judgment of God. So will those in authority over them. I wonder sometimes how these sleep at night.

### *The Primacy of Belief*

The real point at issue is that of the primacy of belief. Belief versus reason; better, reason seen as sovereign and unfettered, or reason submitted to belief. Three, certainly, of the contributors to this volume of essays strike me as affected by the liberal-secularist mentality to the point where belief for them is notional rather than real; the creature of reason rather than its mentor and guide. A false autonomy clouds their belief in God; consequently in the nature of the Church, the truth it teaches and its authority to teach it. All will be right, it would appear, when all three accord with their own desires.

### *Robert Nowell versus the Teaching Church*

The unaffected arrogance of this position I find remarkable; its implications startling to a degree. They amount to the suggestion that, for the last two thousand years, the Catholic Church could well have been wrong in many of her major dogmatic and moral decisions—a fact sufficient to rob her of all credibility; sufficient, therefore, to finish her. But not only her. God also. For it is completely contrary to the mercy of God that He should found a Church to take His truth through time to men, then allow it to teach falsehood as truth and vice versa. This makes a nonsense not only of God's mercy, but of His very existence, for He cannot *be* unless He be perfect and unmercifulness is imperfection. One of the strongest proofs of the truths against which these writers rail is found in their constant upholding over hundreds of years within the Church's teaching tradition; which means the teaching of these truths year in and year out throughout the Church by its Bishops in union with the Popes. It was not for nothing that Pope Paul VI, after three rather dreadful hesitant years, supported his case against contraception in *Humanae Vitae* with reference after reference to the evidence of Scripture and the teachings of the Catholic Church through-

out the centuries. To suppose that this teaching should or, indeed, could be disclaimed at the behest of the contemporary theological establishment and its lay adherents is to misunderstand completely the divine nature and mission of the Catholic Church, to say nothing of the merciful goodness of its Divine Founder, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Yet the supposition is there to a greater or lesser degree in the case of at least three of the writers of these essays; markedly so in that of Robert Nowell, their Editor. The first two pages of this introductory essay—paradoxically entitled “Growth in Freedom”—gives us the tone and trend shared by two others of the seven contributors as well as himself. This is what Nowell writes:

“Being a Catholic is something that, to the outward eye at least, has changed rather dramatically within our lifetime. Thirty years ago Catholics worshipped in a dead language, abstained from meat on Fridays, went regularly to confession, refused to use contraceptives, and were very nervous about disagreeing with each other and above all with official Church teaching on a wide range of issues regarded as central to their faith. Today the Mass is in English, Friday abstinence has gone, the Saturday night queue outside the confessional is no more, most married Catholics use contraceptives, and freedom of speech within the Church is taken for granted — at least by the laity.

“Of these changes the most fundamental is the rediscovery of freedom. The example was set by the Second Vatican Council, when over a period of four years two thousand bishops from all over the world debated publicly in St. Peter’s, Rome, questions that ordinary Catholics had been encouraged to believe were not open to debate. The lesson was confirmed when, in 1968, Paul VI reaffirmed the Church’s traditional condemnation of ‘artificial’ methods of birth control after a period of open debate had encouraged Catholics to look forward to change and made it difficult, if not impossible, for them to accept the old teaching with any conviction.

“In these circumstances being a Catholic can paradoxically appear more difficult. It is no longer (if it



ever was) a question of simply accepting some ready-made formula. Less and less can one rely on the tribal cohesiveness of the Catholic community: even in Ireland there are signs that the social cohesion which has helped to maintain a society in which ninety per cent of Catholics go to Sunday Mass is beginning to crumble. Being a Catholic has more and more become a matter of explicit personal conviction, something that the individual Catholic has to work out for himself or herself in terms of his or her everyday life. And often enough the outcome can diverge fairly radically from what the official Church regards as entailed by being a Catholic. What would from official pronouncements seem important can appear less so to the individual believer, and *vice versa*. These are no doubt necessary and unavoidable tensions, but they are emphasised by the temper of the present pontificate . . ." (*op. cit.*, pp. 11, 12).

### *Are These Still Catholics?*

I hope I will not be deemed unkind if, in the light of this passage and indeed Nowell's whole opening essay, I were to suggest that it took for its title that borne by the book he edits, but in slightly altered form. Not, *Why I am still a Catholic*, but *Why am I still a Catholic?* Having read his contribution with care, along with those of Bernard Bergonzi and Clifford Longley, I cannot see why the three of them remain within the Church, despite their protestations of ultimate adherence to it. Their rejection of so much of its belief and practice is so complete that it seems to me a misnomer that they should continue to call themselves Catholics.

Listen, for example, to Clifford Longley :

"But I have to admit that my own experiences of being one of the rapidly increasing number of 'divorced Roman Catholics' had brought me to question the legitimacy of the Church's entire matrimonial discipline, and in my own case, to dispense myself entirely from it. It was not difficult, given a year or two's reflection." (*op. cit.* p. 120)

"What it amounts to is this. I (we?) do not any longer

look towards the Roman Catholic Church or any other as a supernatural society, and cannot in all honesty put my name to whatever might be described as 'the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church', I do not accept its jurisdiction over my private life; would not dream of going anywhere near the confessional; go to Mass very little; and do not worry about it. Yet I would not finally repudiate it, and if they introduced a simple ceremony for leaving it I would not take part. I would not join any other Church, towards which I would feel an equal or even greater lack of empathy. I do not like the style, yet I am very fond of the people". (*op. cit.* p. 126)

Listen, finally, to Bernard Bergonzi :

"In my youth Catholics accepted authority, while Protestants relied on private judgment; agnostics did not know what to believe. I might define my present position as combining elements of all three: my Catholicism has become quite Protestant, and a reverent agnosticism seems the best response to many of the mysteries or contradictions of existence. There is a sense, too, in which being a Catholic now is like being a Jew, in belonging to a people and tradition, rather than upholding a particular set of clearly defined doctrines. Such personal ecumenism is, for me, at the moment, a sufficient resting place." (*op. cit.* p. 108)

### *Self-Sufficiency and Belief*

These are not the words of those who see God's truth as absolute, in essence changeless, the ultimate and abiding reality in their lives; to be received, therefore, on their knees, which Grace will twine into the very fibre of their being, enabling them, as it does so, to discover new richness within what is God's greatest gift to man; so old and yet so new, the crystal core of all that is. This is the way of belief, in opposition not to reason; but to the arid rationalism of would-be autonomous man. There is mystery here, indeed, but no myth, though the rationalizers would try to make it so. They have to try, for, as long as they remain rationalizers, no other path is open to them. Belief

requires humility—of the sort possessed by those who see themselves as they truly are in relation to God—totally dependent, that is—and act within the terms of that relationship; in submission to the truth with which God, in His goodness, has endowed them. Of this submission the rationalizer is necessarily incapable. His claim to self-sufficiency (God on his own terms) necessarily forbids it. After his own fashion he would be like God. How, then, can he submit himself totally to the God Whom he would be like. Refusal (*non serviam*) is endemic in his situation. Not necessarily outright. Refuge is found by so many rationalizers in a type of self-marginalization that appears to allow them a place as self-appointed mentors—inside and outside the Church at the same time. This way their rationalism is given sufficient play to meet part way the arid claims of their bogus self-sufficiency. Meanwhile, belief in its fullness is forbidden them by their stance in self-sufficiency. Their rescue into fullness can come only with the Grace of God. Argument will get them nowhere. Prayer, above all, and example are the only things that will get them back in their Father's house. Mother Theresa would get them a long way. So, too, would a quiet reading of the story of Bernadette or the children of Fatima.

### *Self-Sufficiency Must Go*

I would stress most firmly that what I have written is in no way directed personally against the three contributors to this volume of essays whom I have mentioned by name. I have selected their contributions as expressive of an attitude all too frequently found within the Catholic Church in the West today. It has to go. It will do so as and when the fullness of belief—still deep in the hearts of the mass of the Faithful—is accorded that fullness of expression which is its prerogative. Responsibility here rests heavily on clergy and religious. One can but pray that they will rise to it.

**His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in Rome, was invited by Cardinal Lustiger of Paris and Archbishop Decourtray of Lyons to give a conference on Catechetics.**

**The following is a shortened version of an article about that Conference, translated from the French Catholic newspaper *L'Homme Nouveau*, February 6, 1983. Acknowledgements to *Lay Witness*, publication of C.U.F.**

# Turning Point in Catechesis

MARCEL CLEMENT

**T**HE conference by Cardinal Ratzinger given in Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, as well as in the Cathedral of Lyons, on January 15 and 16, 1983, will undoubtedly be seen one day as a most important turning point in catechesis in the twentieth century.

What was the substance of the speech by the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith?

## WHAT DID CARDINAL RATZINGER SAY?

Three principal points were made:

1. The widespread difficulties in catechesis today are well known since they are commonplace and serious. Among the causes of the catechetical crisis, the following can be named:

a) "A fundamental and grave mistake was the suppression of the catechism together with the claim that the very genre of it had been superseded and outmoded". b) Emphasis was placed on the method of teaching to such an extent that the content of the message was seriously modified and fragmented. c) "Some no longer have the courage to present the faith as an organic whole, in its

own right but only as partial anthropological glimmers". d) Though it is true that doctrine without experience can be a mere empty formula—nevertheless "to reduce faith to experience can only deprive it of its core".

2) What then is the *core* of catechesis? It is something which can in no circumstances be eliminated. It not only goes back to the origins of the Church; it "was used by Luther . . . as naturally as by the Council of Trent". That core is constituted by the Credo, the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments and the Our Father. "In it is found what the Christian is to believe (Creed), hope for (Our Father), and do (Ten Commandments) as well as in what sectors of life it is to be accomplished (Sacraments and Church)".

3) Evidently the crisis has to be overcome. The future of the Church in France and in the whole world depends on it. The means are indicated in the section entitled "How to overcome the crisis". They include *correcting* the errors described. They require integrating again into catechesis its core elements as a common structure for the full transmission of the faith. They also demand that we again insist on faith in the dogma of Creation, on the profound relationship between the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.

Those who have had experience in catechetics, as practiced for about the past twenty years, can appreciate that Cardinal Ratzinger's conference constitutes an important, indeed a major turning point. It was a solemn act performed by the Cardinal responsible in the Universal Church for safeguarding faith and morals.

In order to have a clear view of this historical event and to unite ourselves in a sufficiently enlightened way with our bishops, it is important to recall the general context of the situation on which the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has passed judgment.

## THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE ACTUAL SITUATION

It is certainly true, as the Auxiliary Bishop of Paris, Daniel Pezeril, wrote in *La Croix*, January 29, 1983, that "French vanity ought not to give us the illusion that he (Cardinal Ratzinger) was critical only of us. His prespec-



tive was global". No one doubts that. But after all, Cardinal Ratzinger came first of all to *us* at the invitation of the Archbishops of Paris and Lyons, because it is from our country that catechetical innovations have spread, are spreading, and will spread to churches in other countries. John Paul II, speaking to French bishops at Issy-les-Moulineaux, stressed that. The cultural radiation of France influences the common good of the Universal Church: "Your responsibility goes beyond 'your' Church, beyond France". In this sense, Cardinal Ratzinger's speech has a global perspective.

Though the French situation is not necessarily a microcosm, it is nevertheless in many ways a typical example of what is in fact going on in several other countries. Now, this situation is grave. It is grave in two respects.

#### a) *Defective Teaching*

I mention only superficially this first aspect, even though it is essential: it involves the aspect of crisis described by Cardinal Ratzinger. A competent exposition of it appeared recently in the Jesuit review *Etudes*, in two articles, one by René Marlê, S.J., "A New Stage of French Catechesis" (October 1980), and another by Serge Duguet: "New Catechetical Courses" (October 1981). I think I can objectively summarize the two articles in saying that they show that our catechetics has *abandoned the idea of teaching* in favor of an *experience of life together*. No longer is there a "transmission of knowledge" but rather "experiencing". There is no longer a question of transmitting a synthesis of the faith, since we are told that that in itself runs the danger of a rigid stereotyping.

I could name other articles of this kind describing the present catechetical scene, but I will not dwell on them. A perusal of these would make clear the extent to which Cardinal Ratzinger's conference expresses concern, judges, and throws light on the actual catechetical situation today. We can prepare our judgment by studying the actual text books imposed on Catholic children in France (and in other countries) for their religious education, and then be

enlightened by the conference of the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

### b) *A Virtual Divorce*

I must also insist on a second aspect of the great danger which the present catechetical situation constitutes in France. It is the position in which many Catholic parents, teachers and priests find themselves—and their number is not to be underestimated—who in maintaining respectful and even filial silence, are often torn between fidelity to their Catholic faith, (enlivened by their *sensus fidei*), and their obedience to the hierarchy of the local Church.

By word of mouth, or by certain “notices”, these parents, teachers, or even priests are eventually ostracized by being branded as “integralists” (right wing extremists, -tr.). Such terms are often used today, not without grave injustice, as a method of secret and concrete excommunication in order to withdraw from them all help from the heart of the local Church. Thus one easily gets rid of those who, even though they often do not have much competence in the matter, do nonetheless have serious problems of conscience when faced with the catechetics being imposed on them. Thus these parents, teachers, and priests who often use catechisms which are not “authorized”, may not perhaps be perfect in their manner of teaching, but certainly their teaching is nearer the *core* of true catechesis than are the new catechisms imposed in France.

### A WORD FROM THE MAGISTERIUM

I hope these words will be read in the profound spirit in which they are intended, i.e. in the spirit of the Church. The actual situation is serious. It leads many Christians into a sort of conscientious objection towards the official catechetical discipline imposed on their children. Sometimes the parents supplement what is taught. Sometimes they correct it. Sometimes they more or less publicly condemn the text used for teaching their children, or they publicly break with their parish and teach some other catechism themselves. Some are in open struggle with their pastor, with the latter accusing them of being in revolt against the Church. On the other hand, some priests

are secretly not in agreement with their bishops. There are parents who form "cultural associations" for the purpose of transmitting the faith. There are others who simply leave the Church, quietly taking their children with them.

All that I describe is written in the mail I receive. In these letters there are cries of suffering that rend the heart. Some have reproached me for not speaking loudly enough against the catechetical situation in the pages of *L'Homme Nouveau* lately. This silence was real and deliberate. When the latest catechetical texts came out (this Fall), we did not voice a judgment. The whole thing was too grave — *We wanted the Magisterium to speak . . .* Together with hundreds of thousands of parents we prayed that sound catechesis would be restored to the children of France. And now the *Magisterium* has spoken. That gives new support to our right to speak up in union with our bishops. *It is out of the question* — I choose my words carefully — that our priests, our bishops, all the administrative organs of the local Church and of the episcopacy of the whole of France, be in disunion with the judgment and the teaching given at Notre Dame Cathedral by the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is this certitude of faith which brings us peace in our decision. It encourages us to break our silence, while remaining profoundly respectful, though saddened.

## WHAT DID THE HOLY FATHER ASK FOR?

Those who have closely followed the development of events on the catechetical scene noted several things this Fall. (A new, uniform, modernist catechetical course was mandated for the beginning of the school year in all of France. -tr.).

It would not be overstating it to say there were serious problems. The Holy Father noted it in speaking to the Bishops of le-de-France on October 1, 1982. While emphasizing the authority and responsibility of the bishops, he spoke in a fully balanced way of the necessity of allowing children "to arrive at revealed doctrine in its entirety and in its specific character". He emphasized

strongly that the texts intended for the transmission of the faith must "involve the ecclesial magisterium" of the bishops "in union with the competent department of the Curia". It was not merely a conventional turn of phrase when the Holy Father spoke to the bishops about "vigilance toward the quality of catechisms", "strengthening pastoral zeal" and "*renewing* communion with the Holy See". These are certainly not empty words, but rather, words full of meaning.

In simple terms, it is a question of recreating a unity between parents and children around their bishops who are by divine right custodians of the faith in their dioceses, and of simultaneously renewing the union of the bishops with Rome at an authentic turning point in order to prevent the catechetical crisis from continuing and worsening.

### WHAT WILL THE HIERARCHY DO?

I will say what I think, because the *Truth makes us free*. The bishops are the successors of the apostles. It is therefore *unimaginable* that the Pope can govern the Church in catechetical matters by going over the heads of the bishops, teachers of the faith in their diocese. But it is also *out of the question* that bishops can impose a catechesis which is explicitly or secretly in radical contradiction — that is to say, in its very roots— with the teaching and the judgment of the Apostolic See. The Pope, when speaking to the French bishops, recalled the two poles of discipline and faith in this matter: the people united with their bishops, and the bishops united with Rome, united not merely in a vague of abstract way but in a clear and concrete way on every one of the points on which the Holy See has now rendered a judgment through the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

We must keep in mind—and on this depends the life or the death of the Church in France: It is morally *out of the question* that the faithful be separated from their bishops in the name of orthodoxy. And it is also morally *out of the question* that catechetical teaching in France

(and its world-wide influence) be isolated from the Apostolic See which is, after all, the guarantor of episcopal legitimacy. With the passage of time the impasse has worsened. On October 1, 1982, the Pope put down the conditions for the twofold and only possible spiritual reunion. We must thank Cardinal Lustiger of Paris and Archbishop Decourtray of Lyons for having found a way out of this impasse by inviting the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to pass judgment on this situation.

After having read and studied the authoritative conference of Cardinal Ratzinger, who can really doubt that this is a sign of God a call made by Peter, perhaps also the thirst of Christ on the Cross? The members of the Mystical Body, our children, are hungry. They are hungry for the true Bread.

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From

**"ONE LORD ONE FAITH"**

by Fr. Vernon Johnson (1929)

(Reference is to the Church of England)

"Thus, all the recent legislation in the Church Assembly which tends to place more authority in the hands of parochial councils and the laity at large, which at one time I should have regarded as quite sound, I now regard as a grave and fatal error. In practice it must defeat its own ends. It aims at winning respect and popularity from the public by putting more authority into its hands, and the only result is a corresponding lessening of the public belief in any Divine Authority in the Church at all.

"In fact the converse is true. The one Church which today is holding her people is the Catholic Church. This is because she possesses a Divine Authority to which her children give a willing obedience".



The January (1983) issue of *Christian Order* included an article by Mgr. Eugene Kevane, who warned that a denial of the dogma of original sin is a standard indicator of the Modernism so prevalent among so-called Catholic theologians today. In a talk given to the Pro Fide Forum earlier this year, Michael Davies explained just how widespread this heresy now is. It is no longer confined to the private discussions of theologians, but is a standard feature of religion texts for Catholic children, even at the primary stage. He proves conclusively that, if the dogma of original sin, in the sense that it was defined by the Council of Trent, is no more than a myth, then the entire Catholic religion loses all credibility. Michael Davies' talk has been slightly adapted for the printed medium. It is in three parts.

# Original Sin : Myth or Dogma

1 : IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND ORIGINAL SIN

MICHAEL DAVIES

THE year is 1858, the country France, the date March 25th, the Feast of the Annunciation, known as Lady Day when England was a Catholic country. This place is Lourdes, an obscure little town on the French side of the Pyrenees—the spectacular range of mountains which separates France from Spain. On the outskirts of the town, at a spot called Massabielle, beside the cold swift-running River Gave, near an evil smelling, perpetually smoking refuse dump, a little girl kneels. Her name is Bernadette Soubirous. She is fourteen years old, her health is poor—she suffers from chronic asthma, she is regarded as far from

intelligent, her education is minimal, and her family poverty-stricken. They live in a disused prison cell, known as the Cachot. It is cold and dark. Throughout each night she tosses, turns, and coughs and coughs on a straw-filled mattress inside those chill stone walls down which the damp perpetually runs. At dawn, she rises to work as a shepherdess to contribute a little something to help her family keep body and soul together. Monsieur Soubirous had once been a miller, but now he has no regular work. He considers a few days casual employment a great blessing.

*"I am the Immaculate Conception"*

Bernadette is not preoccupied with her pain and her poverty. She counts herself fortunate because there is a chance that she might be allowed to make her First Communion. The nuns who teach her have a very poor opinion of her ability, but there is a chance, just a chance, that if she works hard, very hard, she might attain the minimum standard. God is good to her, she feels, very good. On February 11th that year she had gone to Massabielle with her sister Toinette and their friend Jean Abadie. They went to gather firewood, and while there, said Bernadette, a Lady had appeared to her. The Lady wore a long white dress with a blue sash, and over her head a veil. On each foot, Bernadette explained later, was a golden rose, and in her hands a white Rosary.

This was the first of a series of apparitions. On 27th February, the Lady said that Bernadette should go to the priests and tell them to build a chapel at Massabielle. Bernadette went to her parish priest, Father Peyramale, and informed him of this command. Father Peyramale was not impressed. He suggested with, I am sure, no little degree of sarcasm, that Bernadette should ask the Lady whether she would arrange the finance for the chapel and whether, since she wished him to undertake so ambitious a venture, she might care to let him know her name. Thus, on March 25th 1858, Bernadette kneels before the grotto at Massabielle, the beautiful Lady appears once more, and the little girl asks her name. "I am the Immaculate Conception", she replies. Bernadette has never heard these

words before. As far as she is concerned, they might have been in Latin or even in Chinese. Bernadette is a humble and docile little girl. She does not ask for an explanation; she runs to the presbytery, runs to Father Peyramale to give him the Lady's reply. She coughs as she runs, it seems that her lungs will burst; but she does not think of her pain or her discomfort. Along the road, over the bridge, through the village, her mind is filled with two words, and two words only—"Immaculate Conception". She repeats them to herself again, and again, and again. She is terrified that she will forget them, and if she does, how can she face Father Peyramale—let alone the Lady? Well, she does reach the priest. She tells him what the Lady has said, and his attitude to her changes. How could a girl like Bernadette have heard this expression? If, by some remote chance she had done so, why would she have used it if she were attempting to gain celebrity by pretending that Our Lady had appeared to her? Only four years before, on December 8th 1854, Pope Pius IX had defined infallibly and irrevocably the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The dogma had not been accepted with universal acclamation. There were those who did not find it acceptable. They were, in general, men of great intelligence and erudition. They "knew better" than the Vicar of Christ, the successor of Saint Peter, the visible head of the Church upon earth, for they were scholars. Could it be that Our Lady had decided to confound these learned men and appear on earth herself, to assure us that the Vicar of her Son was correct in teaching that her Immaculate Conception was a truth belonging to the divine revelation committed by Our Lord to His Apostles? If this was so, what a strange place to appear and what an inappropriate person to choose as the recipient of her message. Who would believe this scarcely literate peasant girl, and how would a message delivered in Lourdes become known throughout the world when the name of the little town was unknown to the majority of Frenchmen? But then, who would have imagined that God could save the world by becoming incarnate in the womb of a poor Jewish girl in Nazareth, or by being born in a stable in Bethlehem to be adored by shepherds? Well, when Ber-

adette told Father Peyramale what the Lady had said, that she was the Immaculate Conception, he began to believe her—and within decades so did the whole Catholic world. Once again, God had used the humble to confound the great.

### *What Pius IX Infallibly Defined*

And what was it that Pope Pius IX had defined on December 8th 1854? Here is the key passage from his Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*:

We pronounce, declare and define unto the glory of the holy and indivisible Trinity, the honour and ornament of the Holy Virgin, the Mother of God, for the exaltation of the Catholic Faith and the increase of the Christian religion, by the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and in our own authority, that the doctrine which holds the Blessed Virgin Mary to have been, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus, the Saviour of Mankind, preserved free from all stain of original sin, was revealed by God, and is, therefore, to be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful.

*“Total pulchra es, Maria, et macula originalis non est in te”*. These words from the office for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception must surely bring joy to the heart of everyone who loves Our Saviour and His Virgin Mother. “Thou art all fair, O Mary, and the strain of original sin is not found in thee”.

The Mass and the Office of this day are replete with inspired praise for the Mother of God:

Thou art the glory of Jerusalem; thou art the joy of Israel;

thou art the honour of our people.

Blessed art thou, O Virgin Mary, by the Lord, the most high God, above all the women upon the earth.

Today is the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who with her virginal foot crushed the head of the serpent.

## *If Original Sin Goes All Goes*

Alas, there are many claiming to be Catholics today who could not say these words with conviction. These men do not accept the infallible definition of Pope Pius IX, which obliges us to believe that Our Lady was preserved free from all stain of original sin; they cannot believe that the Lady said to Saint Bernadette: "I am the Immaculate Conception" because, where they are concerned, such a statement would be meaningless. These men, and women do not claim that Our Lady was conceived in a state of original sin, far from it. No, they do not believe in the doctrine of original sin as taught by the Church: where they are concerned, everyone is immaculately conceived. There is no sin but personal sin, and it therefore follows that Pope Pius IX declared Our Lady to have been free from something which is non-existent. The conception of Our Lady was no more and no less immaculate than that of King Herod, Martin Luther, or Henry VIII. If those who deny the traditional teaching are correct, if the dogma of original sin, which is proposed to us by the Church as divinely revealed, is no more than a myth, which we must discard now that Catholics "have come of age", to quote a favourite phrase of the progressives, then we might as well discard the whole of Catholicism. If the Church commits her infallible authority to a doctrine which has no basis in objective reality, then how can we believe in anything she teaches?

"Ah", we might be told by a proponent of contemporary catechetics, "but traditional teaching on any aspect of the faith must now be considered in the light of Vatican II": Fair enough. There is an insight of Vatican II concerning the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady in *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. It affirms the traditional teaching in terms that are clear and inspiring:

Finally, preserved free from all guilt of original sin, the Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn. She was exalted by the Lord as Queen of all, in order that she might be the more thoroughly con-



formed to her Son, the Lord of lords and the Conqueror of sin and death.

In this Constitution, Our Lady is presented with her traditional role of the Second Eve, just as her Son is the Second Adam.

The February 1983 issue of Father Paul Crane's excellent periodical, *Christian Order*, contains an article by Mgr. Eugene Kevane, a member of the Pontifical Academy of Theology in Rome. Monsignor Kevane comments :

It might be emphasized here that a standard indicator of the heterodox or "Modernist" movement is a strange resistance to the revealed doctrine of original sin. Persons who evaluate catechetical literature should be especially alert for this aberration. For if our First Parents did not fall into original sin, and leave us that proneness to sin which marks our own natures, why bother to teach about a redemption? Why be concerned about the Sacrifice of the New Testament? What need of a Redeemer? The pieces of the contemporary puzzle fall readily into place.

#### *A Generation of Religious Illiterates*

Mgs. Kevane is correct. The "contemporary puzzle" to which he refers concerns the religious education of Catholic children (and adults for that matter), now known as "catechetics". And the puzzle posed by contemporary catechetics is that, to quote Monseigneur Kevane again, "How have we Catholics come to produce a generation of religious illiterates?" Strong words, but amply justified. Catholic schools today are, in general, producing a generation of religious illiterates. In all too many cases a so-called Catholic school presents a danger to the faith of the Catholic child. If he emerges from his school as a religiously illiterate Catholic, he is one of the lucky ones. Those who are not so lucky will have had their faith destroyed.

In his article, Mgr. Kevane quotes Cardinal Ratzinger, now Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Cardinal Ratzinger does not speak of a puzzle, he speaks of decadence :

No one can deny that the last ten years have been harmful to the Church. Instead of the promised renewal,

they have given us a process of decadence which to a large extent began in the name of the Council and has done nothing but discredit the Council itself. We can therefore affirm that there will be no renewal until there is a change of course and an abandonment of the errors adopted after the Council.

### *Original Sin and its Effects*

The errors to which Cardinal Ratzinger refers were not something new which emerged after the Council. Most of them, as I will show, had been condemned formally by the Council of Trent. Adam was created in what is known as a state of original justice, blessed with the gift of sanctifying Grace, a share in the Divine Life of his Creator. He was thus truly made in the image of God. This gift of sanctifying grace, together with the other qualities of original justice, integrity, and immortality, belonged to his nature. They would have been transmitted to all his descendants had he not sinned. But sin he did. Saint Thomas Aquinas following Augustine, tells us that it was the sin of pride—a desire to gain likeness to God not in being (which he had), but in knowledge. Adam's nature was transformed by this sin—deformed would be a more accurate expression—and it is this tainted nature which is received by his descendants. At the moment of conception, the physical body received from our parents is united with a soul infused by God: but, as Saint Augustine has explained, it is a soul void of grace to which it has no right, infused into a vessel already defiled. And without the aid of divine grace, even in its mother's womb, the child becomes the prey of Satan. The mother brings forth her blighted child in pain and anguish. Its first accents are cries and weepings for it is a child of wrath, and the voice of God exclaims upon it: "What is born of flesh is flesh. . . . You must be born again". "You must be born again"; the mercy of God is infinite and transcends our comprehension. In the liturgy of Holy Saturday the sin of Adam is called a happy fault—*felix culpa*,—because it merited so great a Redeemer. The word "redeem" means to buy back that which was lost, and Christ Our Redeemer paid the price of our sins by shedding His Precious Blood for us upon the Cross. "You must be

born again". . . We can be born again—born again of water and the Holy Ghost. In our baptism we die with Christ, the Second Adam, and rise from death with Him, rise from the spiritual death in which we are conceived and, cleansed of all sin through His Blood shed for us in sacrifice, we share, as Adam did, in God's own life. The baptized Christian has been justified, justified through the merits of Jesus Christ and, as Cardinal Newman explained it, the great benefit of justification is: "This one thing—the transference of the soul from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Christ".

But we have not returned after baptism to the *status quo* which prevailed before the fall. We are not immortal, and we have lost the gift of integrity, that is, body and soul are no longer in complete harmony. The soul is indeed delivered from the power of Satan by the blessed waters of baptism. The baptized person is a Christian, bears a Christian name, is a temple of the Holy Ghost and an heir to eternal life—though liable to reject that inheritance by serious and unrepented personal sin. But the scars left upon his nature by the primal wound of Adam are deep indeed. The grace of Christ holds possession of the soul, but the body bears the penalties of Adam's sin in every mortal sense, and vein, and fibre. It agitates the soul with its passions, it sways her with its fickleness, it blinds her with its lusts, it torments her with its petulance, it worries her with its incessant wants and cravings, it urges her to all manner of selfishness and pride; and, thus, that man whom God designed to be spiritual in the flesh is ever inclined to be carnal in the mind. In baptism we receive the gift of Sanctifying Grace; throughout our lives God will always give us the actual grace we need to overcome temptations or to repent of our falls into sin, providing we make a sincere effort to be virtuous, and make use of the helps offered to us by the Church—particularly the grace of the Sacraments. But if we are lukewarm in our desire for grace, if we do not fight the evil inclinations of our weakened nature, our soul will be seduced by Satan, it will return to the captivity from which it was redeemed by baptism. The soul will become once more the victim of the flesh, the slave of Satan, and, as Saint Paul expresses it: "The carnal man cannot see the things which are of the

Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:14). The great Apostle was the first to recognize his own weakness. When we are inclined to despair of overcoming our own sinfulness we should recollect that an inclination to sin is part of the human condition, and if Saint Paul, who was converted by an act of exceptional and blinding grace, was not exempted from the struggle between nature and grace, what right have we to expect such a privilege? The greatest of saints have undergone the dark night of the soul, and the nearer we approach to the ideal of the Christian life the more fiercely will Satan assault us. "I know", says Saint Paul, "that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not. For the good which I will, I do not, but the evil which I will not, that I do. . . I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me (Rom. 7:18).

### *Our Lady Preserved from Original Sin*

But, as we are taught in the infallible definition of Pope Pius IX, not for even the briefest instant was the soul of the Mother of God tainted with original sin. Her Son was her Saviour, as He is ours, but He exercised His greatest power by preserving her from original sin. And if, as Our Lord said to Simon, more love is owing where more has been forgiven (Luke 7:40), Mary was bound in more love to Jesus, as she had received from His Hands the greatest of forgivenesses in the greatest of redemptions.

Mary is, of course, the Woman spoken of in Genesis 3:5: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel". The Fathers of the Church delighted to depict Mary as the Second Eve. She resembles Eve in all that concerns innocence, whilst she is the contrast of Eve in all that concerns sin. The Fathers compare the original innocence and purity of Mary to the original innocence and purity of Eve. They show that Adam was formed of the earth while it was yet virginal and immaculate, before human blood had flowed upon it, before crime had defiled it, before man had even broken

or compressed it with his labour, before it had opened for the burial of man. They then show that Christ was formed from an origin no less pure, no less virginal, no less immaculate than the earth from which Adam was made.

They also point out how Eve lost all things for us by the free action and choice of her will, and how Mary gained all things for us by the free choice and submission of her will. Hence they set the faith of Mary against the infidelity of Eve, and the obedience of Mary against the rebellion of Eve, and the innocence and perpetual immaculate purity of Mary against the sin and defilement of Eve. They lay particular stress upon the necessity of Mary consenting freely to become the Mother of God's Son; it was upon this free consent that our salvation depended. Listen to Saint Irenaeus :

As Eve became, by her disobedience, the cause of death to herself and to the entire human race, so Mary, who, though a virgin, had yet a predestined husband, was by her obedience made the cause of salvation to herself and the entire human race. . . Thus the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied through Mary's obedience. For what the virgin Eve tied fast by unbelief, that the Virgin Mary untied, by Faith.

*(To be continued)*

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## QUOTES

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

*—Anonymous*

There are no rules of architecture for a castle in the clouds.

*—G. K. Chesterton*



# Book Reviews

## DISSECTING A DISSENTER

**The New Biblical Theorists: Raymond E. Brown and Beyond** by George A. Kelly; Servant Books, Ann Arbor, 1983; 189 pp. US price \$12.95.

Mgr. Kelly is John A. Flynn, Professor of Contemporary Catholic Problems at St. John's University, New York, and one of the best informed men in the United States regarding the state of the Church in that country.

In 1979, he published a massive 500-page survey of several aspects of the Church in the United States entitled *The Battle for the American Church*.

This was a comprehensive account of the contest between the Hierarchy and the radical scholars for control of the American Church and, summing up, the author expresses the view that in 1979 the contest was evenly poised.

Two years later in 1981, he published *The Crisis of Authority: Pope John Paul II and the American Bishops*. In this book of a little over 100 pages, he argued that the battle lines had shifted. Now the question was not whether the Bishops would carry the day against the radical scholars, but whether, by tacitly or openly rejecting the authority of the Pope, they would bring the American Church to the brink of schism.

In Mgr. Kelly's opinion, the locus of tension was now the ambivalent position of the Bishops, torn between supporting the faith of the Church as taught by the Magisterium most recently at Vatican II, and adopting the views made fashionable by the radical scholars who claim to exercise a "parallel Magisterium".

Now, in *The Biblical Theorists*, he completes a kind of trilogy by turning his attention to one of the leading scholarly dissenters, Fr. Raymond E. Brown, S.S. He has chosen Fr. Brown, he tells us, because he is recognised as the leading biblical scholar in the United States; one could add that he is probably the most influential writer on biblical subjects in the English-speaking world.

Mgr. Kelly is right to concentrate on a scripture scholar, for as C. S. Lewis has said: "The undermining of the old orthodoxy has been mainly the work of divines engaged in New Testament criticism".

It is not too much to say that Mgr. Kelly, by a careful analysis of Fr. Brown's arguments as found in his recent books and articles, has pricked the bubble of his inflated reputation, blown up by his admiring colleagues and some members of the American Hierarchy, with not a little help from Fr. Brown himself.

Fr. Brown claims that he approaches the New Testament in a spirit of scientific objectivity, relying on the historico-critical method to reveal the true meaning of the sacred text. This means that, in his interpretation of the text, he pays no heed to the witness of Catholic tradition, and is relying on a method about which many non-Catholic scholars now have serious doubts. Fr. Brown's positivist method, in the opinion of Fr. Rene Laurentin, leaves him and the reader "stranded on a noble scientific doubt".

It is curious that Fr. Brown should have found stalwart defenders among the American Bishops because he rejects their claim to be the successors of the Apostles. Vatican II did indeed make this claim for them, but Fr. Brown dismisses this teaching of the Council as "biblically naive".

This is but one of 16 points listed by Kelly (pp 136-137) on which Brown rejects the traditional teaching of the Church. Nor is it only the authority of the Church which receives this high-handed treatment, for of her Founder he has written: "Jesus was a Jew of the first third of the first century whose words were so time-conditioned and so locale-conditioned that hearers (or readers) can hardly expect to find there the timeless word spoken by God".

Despite the radical character of so many of his views, Fr. Brown has the nerve to present himself as occupying a place at the "centre" of Catholic theological thought, midway between the extreme liberals and the fundamentalists. His claim has no basis in fact, but it enables him to dismiss as a "fundamentalist" anyone, not a professional scripture scholar, who ventures to criticise his views, no matter how valid the criticism may be. Scripture

scholars who disagree with him are dismissed as "incompetent and old-fashioned".

Fr. Brown can more easily strike this pose of being in the "rhetorical centre" because he rarely commits himself to an outright denial of traditional views. Instead, he insinuates a denial by posing a question and marshalling the evidence in favour of a negative answer.

Thus, he questions the historical value of the infancy narratives in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, and the factual character of the various items contained in them. Fr. John L. McKenzie, who believes in frankness is not impressed by Brown's techniques.

"Brown", he writes, "manages to avoid saying that there is no historical evidence for the Davidic descent of Jesus, for the birth in Bethlehem, or for the virginal conception, at the same time affording ample evidence for the perceptive reader to draw this conclusion".

Mgr. Kelly shows conclusively that Brown's claim to scientific objectivity is quite hollow. All that Brown has done is to distort the New Testament evidence in order to make a case for his 20th century ecumenical and pluralist preconceptions.

To show that there is nothing really new in the rampant "pluralism" that now plagues the Church, Brown invents "Community of the Beloved Disciple", portraying it as a kind of independent sect at odds with the other Christian communities regarding the content of the faith, and to account for this division he postulates a bitter rivalry between St. Peter and St. John.

Mgr. Kelly has no trouble in showing that this theory is guesswork from start to finish, as a tally of at least four score passages containing such phrases as "I suspect" and "it may well be" makes abundantly plain.

To further his ecumenical designs, Brown maintains that there is no evidence in the New Testament for a Eucharistic sacrifice, with it corresponding priesthood, or for the institution of episcopacy. If his reading of the New Testament is accepted, he thinks, reunion with the Protestant Churches, including those which have no Bishops, will be made much easier.

Cardinal Sheehan provided a masterly refutation of these theses in the pages of the *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* (November, 1975; January, 1976).

Much of Brown's case is based on the lack of evidence—the argument from silence. But he also ignores the evidence that is to be found in the New Testament for these doctrines. Thus, he does not even mention *1 Corinthians 10*, with its clear reference to the Eucharistic sacrifice. *Philippians 1* mentions Bishops and deacons but the Church in Philippi “may not be typical”; the evidence of the Pastoral Epistles he rejects as too late to be worth bothering with.

The witness of the *First Epistle of Clement* to Hierarchy and Eucharist is clear but Brown contends that it is “confused”. Even clearer is the testimony of the *Epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch*, but these “do not certainly describe a universal situation”. And so it goes on — special pleading all the way.

When he is discussing the phrase in the Creed, “**born of the Virgin Mary**”, Brown blatantly misquotes J. N. D. Kelly's standard work, *The Early Christian Creeds*, as Mgr. Kelly has no trouble in proving.

The author submitted his manuscript to a dozen professors of scripture and dogmatic theology and, while not all agreed with all his views, all agreed that there was need for a wide airing of the issues it raises. Debate has been too long delayed, and the radical scholars, enjoying *carte blanche* for the diffusion of their views, have brought the Church in the United States to what Fr. Andrew Greeley declares is “a state of chaos bordering on anarchy”.

The restoration of order will require a long and difficult campaign, but there is no doubt that Mgr. Kelly has scored a direct hit with his opening salvo.

—G. H. Duggan, S.M.

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## BRADBURNE'S WAY

**Strange Vagabond of God: The Story of John Bradburne** by John Dove, S.J.; Ward River Press Ltd., Knocksedan House, Swords, Co. Dublin, Ireland; pp. 296; £4.95 (Irish), £4.00 (English)+postage (within U.K. 40p; overseas 70p).

I had the pleasure of leafing through the draft of this book a couple of years or so before it was published. At the time, I was asked by the Author whom I had known for years what I thought of it. I said at once that, if I had my way, I would print a first edition of twenty thousand copies. I have just finished reading the printed and published version. Having read it from cover to cover I can only say that I am still of the same opinion. More so, perhaps, than ever.

And why? Because this is no ordinary book. And the reason, if this does not sound too trite, is that its subject was no ordinary person. Seeking refuge in a paradox, what I am trying to say is that he was extraordinary in his ordinariness. The stereotyped picture of the "servant of God" in no way fitted John Bradburne. He was no hard-faced and withdrawn ascetic. Religious life would have crushed him. His was no manufactured nor structured piety. The thing that John Bradburne had; what he came to early on in the course of his pilgrim's way was a sense—deep beyond words—of his total dependence on God. His assent to this was real; in no way notional. It pervaded the whole of his being. His affair with God was predominantly one of the heart. Reason had its place; but love predominated. Belief was all. His life was a going to God; a longing for that lasting identity with Him in love, which only death can bring the Christian and the final reality of which lights the path on this earth of all too few of us. This is the story of one for whom the final reality was all. That is the difference between John Bradburne and most of the rest of us. What for him was a consummation towards which every moment of his days was directed is for the run of the rest of us so often no more than a happening devoutly (or not) to be hoped for: meanwhile there are other things. For Bradburne there were no other things. All was swept within his vision of that final consummation which was to come and whose beauty shed its light during his time on this earth on all about him. His response on his way to that consummation could only be in terms of love for all that God in His goodness had seen fit to place about him. In Bradburne there was no false dychotomy; his love was not split be-



tween created being and Creator. How could it be? He saw in all the imprint in beauty of Him Who is Beauty itself. Most naturally, then, he went out to all not in spite of God, but because of Him. His life, in consequence, was incredibly rich. Having nothing in the way of material things and wanting nothing, he possessed everything through love. Bradburne's life was one of gospel simplicity in the full and true sense of that phrase. His stark selflessness in striking contrast to the self-sufficiency which so many seek in their lives under the guise of self-fulfilment; themselves first, with others used, however unwittingly, as so many props for their own conceit. The reverse was Bradburne's way. With God his first love, he gave himself to others without affectation, most naturally so to say, for God's sake. The lepers he tended with such love in the last years of his life were his all, the gift most precious of God to himself. They were his special joy; his consummation on this earth of what was to come when he left it — as he did, with a bullet in his back; which he could have dodged, had he abandoned them. This he refused to do. "Greater love than this no man hath . . .".

John Bradburne was no solitary; but he loved solitude; not to remove himself from people, but, within solitude's embrace, to give himself the more easily to God and, therefore, to others. This was his way. He came to it through struggle, with Grace as his prop and he would be the first to say that there are other ways. His was but one expression of love that is God-based and true. As such, it has many facets—each one most precious—to which I would not be tempted—any more, I think, than Bradburne would—to assign priorities. He would be the first to say, I am sure, that the love of God that was his would find its compere most certainly in the lasting tenderness of that love that brings a boy and a girl from the earliest days of their marriage to endow themselves wholly with each other. This path of theirs they cannot tread in the *totality* of its lovingness and loveliness without the Grace of God. It was the same for John Bradburne. Surface-wise his path to God was not theirs.

Look beneath and you will find that each owes its all to its rooting in the Grace of God.

There is an identity here which we would do very well to recognise. For lack of this recognition many marriages today within the Church and out of it, lose their savour and drift into no more than stereotyped companionship. It is the same in religious life. Naturalness is not enough. John Bradburne's message for the contemporary world, in particular, is that, whatever its mode, life in the fulness of its beauty cannot be lived apart from the Grace of God. If we would live it to the full, His love and His Grace must be the abiding reality in each of our lives. That is the message of this book. For want of it, so many young lives today lack the fullness that could be theirs. This book, I think, is most specially for them. I commend it with all the warmth I can muster. Its simplicity of style is such as to suit it perfectly to its subject. The combination makes for compelling reading. The price is not too steep for its close on three hundred pages, undertaken in face of very considerable difficulties.

For the convenience of readers, this book is stocked by the Holy Cross Catholic Bookshop, 4 Brownhill Road, Catford, London SE6 2EJ: Phone 01-461-0896. The price post free is in English pounds sterling—£4.

—*Paul Crane, S.J.*

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### NEW PUBLICATION

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